



TALONS & TRIUMPHS

NORTH TEXAS 2025

IMPACT REPORT 2024

**Welcoming
New Team Members**

**Prairie Conservation
and Native Plants**

**Rehab
Success Stories**

**Education and
Ambassadors**

**Blackland
Prairie
Raptor
Center**



OUR MISSION

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is dedicated to environmental preservation through public education and the conservation of birds of prey and wildlife in their natural habitat. Named after the tallgrass prairie that once covered more than 23,500 square miles of Texas from the Red River to San Antonio, Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is a rehabilitation and conservation education organization, specializing in fostering better public understanding of the relationship between birds of prey and healthy ecosystems.

BPRC is state and federally licensed. Texas Parks and Wildlife permit #: REH-0715-124
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit #: MB138982

OUR TEAM

Executive Director: Laura Johnson

Medical Director: Janel Mason, DVM

Community Engagement Coordinator: Hailey LeBaron

Maintenance & Operations Mgr: Karen Mitchell

Conservation & Restoration Mgr: Cody Hoya

Raptor Ambassador Mgr: Cheryl Circo

Program Coordinator: Andrea Darley Hanson

Volunteer Coordinator: Marla Layne

Accountant: Darrin Sanders

CONTACT US

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center
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Telephone: (469) 964-9696

Programs/Events: education@bpraptorcenter.org

General Questions: info@bpraptorcenter.org

Volunteer: volunteer@bpraptorcenter.org

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Us!*

facebook.com/bpraptorcenter
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INJURED BIRD?
Call 469-964-9696
9 am - 3 pm
7 days a week

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Conservation Partners,

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense gratitude for the dedication, passion, and generosity of our incredible community. This year has been a testament to the power of collaboration and commitment to protecting the raptors that grace our skies and the habitats they depend on.

At the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, our mission has always been clear: to conserve and rehabilitate native raptor species while educating and inspiring the public about their vital role in our ecosystem. In the past year, we have expanded our rescue and rehabilitation efforts, reaching new milestones in wildlife care and release. Thanks to our devoted team and supporters like you, we successfully treated and released a record number of injured raptors back into the wild, giving them a second chance at life.

Education continues to be a cornerstone of our work. Through school programs, public outreach events, and hands-on experiences, we have engaged thousands of individuals—fostering a deeper appreciation for these magnificent birds and the prairies they call home. We believe that by inspiring the next generation of conservationists, we are ensuring a future where raptors and their habitats thrive.

This report highlights the progress we've made, the challenges we've faced, and the goals we are striving toward. None of this would be possible without you—our dedicated volunteers, donors, partners, and advocates. Your unwavering support fuels our mission, and together, we are making a lasting impact.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. As we look ahead, I am excited for the opportunities that lie before us and confident that, together, we will continue to protect and celebrate these incredible birds of prey.

With gratitude,

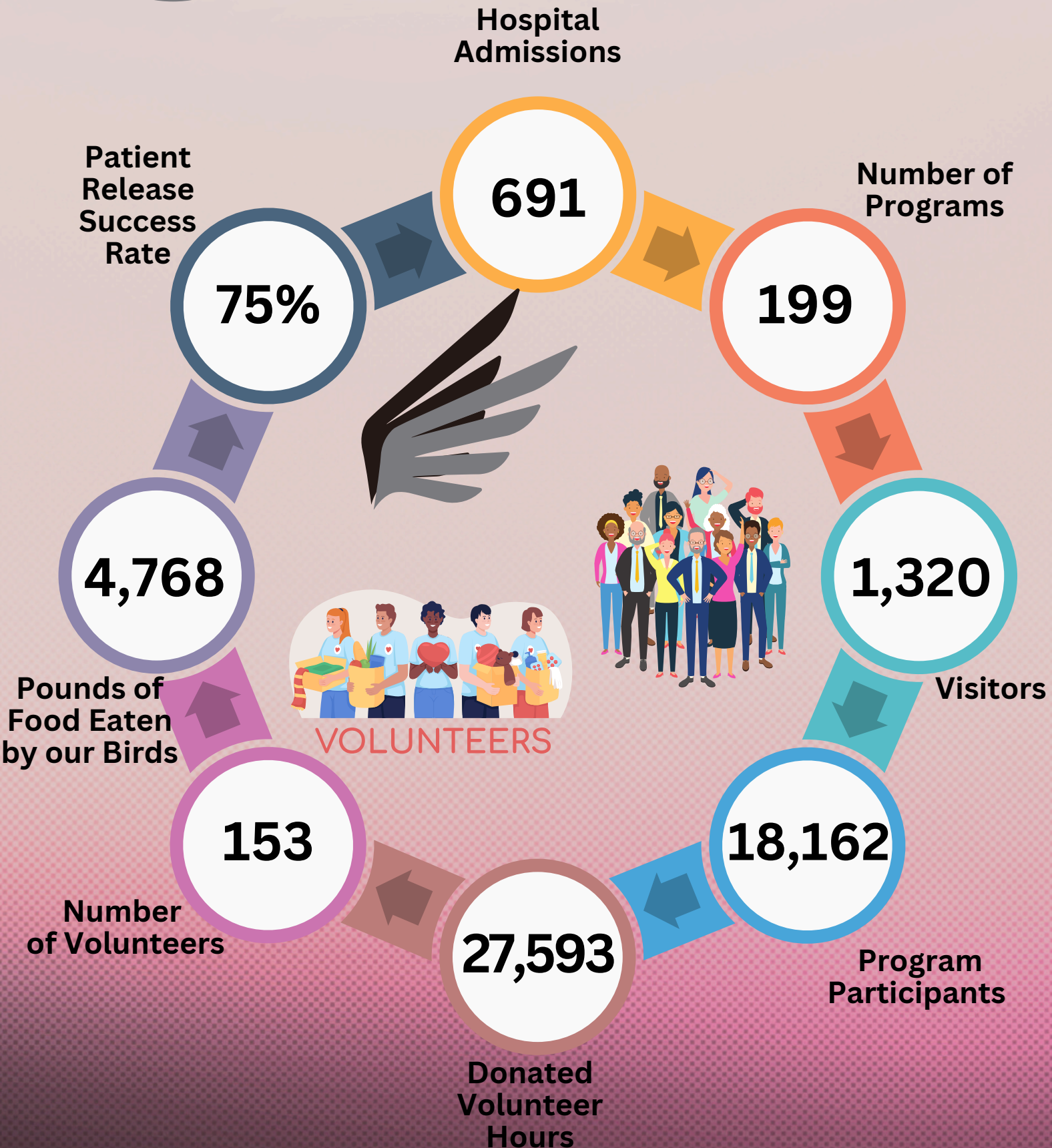
Laura Johnson

Laura Johnson
Executive Director





IMPACT 2024





MEET OUR TEAM



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Courtney Scott, Board Chair
Elisa Caywood, Secretary
Laura Johnson, Executive Director

John Frost, Co-Chair
Henry Merrick Darley, Treasurer
Marla Layne, Member At-Large

BLACKLAND PRAIRIE RAPTOR CENTER TEAM



Laura Johnson
Executive Director



Janel Mason, DVM
Medical Director



Hailey LeBaron
Community
Engagement
Coordinator



Karen Mitchell
Maintenance &
Operations Mgr.



Cheryl Circo
Raptor
Ambassador Mgr.



Cody Hoya
Conservation &
Restoration Mgr.



Andrea Darley Hanson
Program Coordinator



Marla Layne
Volunteer Coordinator



Darrin Sanders
Accountant



MEET OUR TEAM



WELCOME OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBERS



Cheryl Circo

Raptor Ambassador
Manager

"I did not choose the bird life, the bird life chose me. I have been volunteering and working in animal care since I was 15 and wound up falling in love with birds of prey along the way. I love being able to showcase how special raptors are and why they are so important. Here at Blackland Prairie Raptor Center I am able to use my knowledge and experience to help enhance the education department and grow my leadership skills with amazing coworkers by my side."



Darrin Sanders
Accountant

"After spending my career in small businesses and corporations, I'm thrilled to be on the nonprofit side with such a passionate organization at BPRC. Their deep expertise and love for nature, conservation, and education—along with their incredible commitment to raptor rehabilitation—make me excited to be part of this mission."



Cody Hoya
Conservation &
Restoration Manager

"I've loved plants and gardening since I was a child. As a fifth-generation native Texan, I grew up exploring the woods and meadows throughout east Texas, and studied ecology and botany in college. I've lived in north Texas for 20 years now, and found BPRC through my Master Naturalist friends. When the prairie management opportunity opened, I thought it would be a perfect fit for my passion and background. I'm very excited to be here and to join this wonderful team of dedicated individuals!"



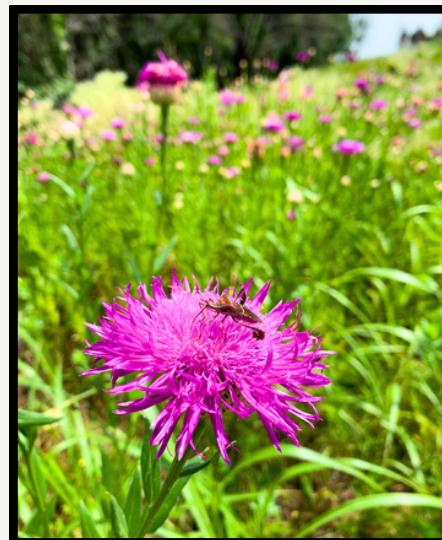
CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

By Cody Hoya & Lorelei Stierlen

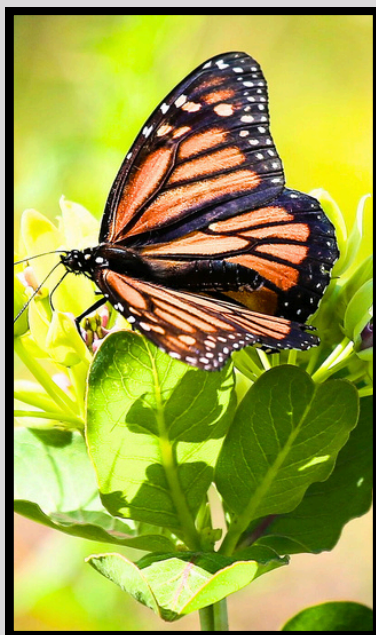
February 2024 was a milestone for the restoration team! The third time was the charm for the prescribed burn of thirty-five acres of the south end of the property. With twenty-two acres of our beloved Blackland Prairie recovered from a forest of eastern red cedar, the process of restoration began in earnest.

Efforts to reduce invasive species, namely Johnsongrass, sweet clover, Scabiosa and bastard cabbage. Research assistant Lune Martin spent the spring and summer months investigating the soil/plant community relationships on the south end as well as being an integral part of the invasive species removal effort.

Here is Lune's reflection on his time spent in our prairie:



*American Basketflower blooming in our south prairie.
Photograph by Lune Martin*



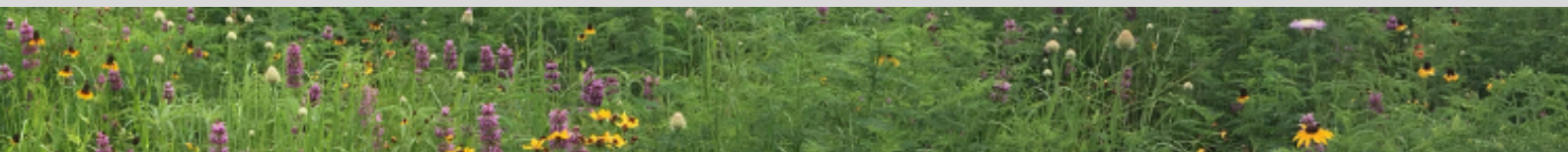
*Monarch on Green Milkweed.
Photograph by Lorelei Stierlen*

"In my research at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, I found that the prairie's resilience provides shifts in perspective, bounding one to endless orange fields of bluestem. As relentless as the greenbriar was, as far as the johnsongrass reached, and as hot as the fire smoldered, the countless wonders of the blacklands shone.

Attempting to grasp some of the mechanisms behind our prairie, I studied soil nutrient levels, determining that forb dominance was indicative of higher soil nutrients. This brought me closer to recognizing smaller aspects of the prairie. Nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium, and sodium levels indicate important markers of plant health; likewise, noticing the hidden life resting on native vegetation inspires wonder, necessary for prairie exploration.

Digging deep into the prairie brought me close to these small wonders. It is important to recognize the incomprehensible complexity of the prairie: a small crab spider hanging onto a rattlesnake master or a cleverly wound green snake in the tallgrass serve as reminders for what prairie restoration is about, at times when it seems difficult to continue. I implore everyone to gaze on the prairie with careful eyes and to notice the small communities of organisms as a scientist observes small changes in soil nutrient levels."

-Lune Martin



(Continued next page)



CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

The north end prairie firebreak preparation began ahead of the planned 24/25 winter season burn, with volunteer Johnny McCulloch leading the effort and overseeing its ongoing maintenance. Johnny's efforts both in the park and in maintaining our firebreaks ensured that we were well-prepared for our burn on February 25th, which proved to be the best burn we've had so far.

Cody Hoya joined us as Conservation & Restoration Manager in mid-November and has had the privilege of studying with Lorelei Stierlen, Environmental Scientist, who has been directing the restoration of our prairie for the past decade. Cody comes to us with a background in ecology and botany from the University of Texas at Austin and a wide-ranging career in both for- and non-profit horticulture and land management.



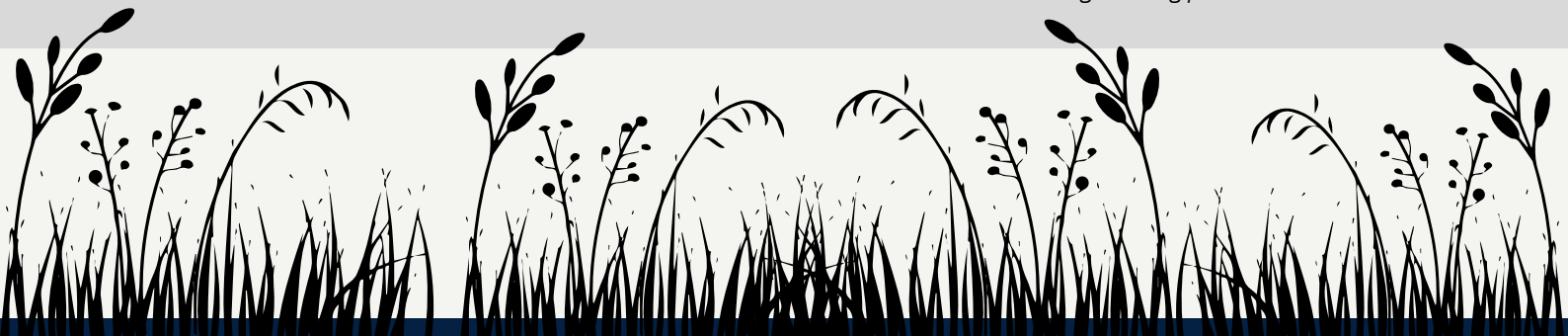
L to R: Johnny McCulloch, Lorelei Stierlen and Cody Hoya, photograph by Duane Mortensen. Below: Last February's prescribed burn of the north prairie.



Between November and January, we've welcomed six new prairie conservation volunteers, and they've had the privilege of training with long-time prairie conservation volunteer Duane Mortensen, who has been overseeing the care of the south prairie since last summer. Together, we are continuing progress with the eradication of the invasive Japanese privet (*Ligustrum*) in the south prairie as well as making further inroads in opening it up from woody encroachment. We are thrilled to see a great response from our post-burn seeding in the south prairie and are excited to see how it develops over the coming spring and summer.



Volunteers Erica Jennings and Maya Wickham gathering perches for our rehab birds.





REHABILITATION SPOTLIGHT

REHAB STORIES

2024 Brought Us Stories of Hope



Successful Reunification

The Blackland Prairie Raptor Center was thrilled to announce the successful return of the baby bald eagle, Henley (the name given to the baby eagle by the community where the eagles reside) to its new nest following the destruction of its original nest by a severe storm on May 28, 2024.

The original nest was almost completely destroyed during the storm, the young eagle was found approximately 50 feet below the nesting site, and its condition was concerning due to what appeared to be soft tissue damage to the eaglet's wing.

The City of Dallas conservation team, Roger's Wildlife Rehabilitation and Blackland Prairie Raptor Center worked together to get the eaglet into care. The baby eagle was taken into temporary care at Blackland Prairie Raptor Center to assess the eagle's overall health and body condition. It luckily did not have any major injuries and was in good condition to return to its parents. A secure nest was constructed out of a deer stand that was donated by the City of Dallas, mimicking the original nesting environment as closely as possible. Henley was gently placed back into its new nest under the watchful eyes of raptor experts as well as the Lake Park Estates community, ensuring its safety and continued development in its natural habitat. The young eagle quickly adapted to its new surroundings. and we were excited to share that Henley and one of the adults made contact the next day and the local community was able to witness his first flight.

This remarkable reunification underscores the importance of the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center's ongoing efforts to protect and conserve wildlife habitats. The community's support was overwhelming, we are so grateful for the contributions that enabled us to respond and provide medical care for Henley.



What to do if you find an injured raptor...

Please go to: <https://bpraptorcenter.org/raptor-rescue/>
For further information call 469-964-9696.





REHABILITATION SPOTLIGHT

REHAB STORIES



The Importance of Diagnostics

A young turkey vulture, still lacking its signature red head, arrived at our clinic unable to stand. Each time it attempted to stand, it would fall over. Radiographs revealed no fractures, but turkey vultures and other scavengers are particularly susceptible to lead poisoning. We tested the vulture's blood lead levels, which came back high.

During the first week, the vulture was largely immobile, lying down and showing little movement. Many feared it wouldn't survive. However, after undergoing chelation therapy—a treatment that removes lead from the body—its lead levels dropped significantly. Gradually, the vulture began to improve, eventually standing and regaining strength.

We moved it to a limited-activity enclosure, where it started walking and, later, flying again. In the large flight cage, it worked on building flight endurance and demonstrated it was ready for release.

Lead poisoning can be fatal, but this vulture made a remarkable full recovery. Having access to diagnostic tools like LeadCare enables us to quickly identify lead toxicity and administer appropriate treatments, improving outcomes for birds like this one.



Whether helping with the financial cost of caring for this patient, providing food when asked, or simply sharing these stories to those around you, your efforts have helped this and other patients in BPRC care!





REHABILITATION SPOTLIGHT

REHAB STORIES



Long Road to Recovery

Barbed wire poses a significant threat to raptors, often causing severe injuries when birds of prey collide with these fences while hunting. Over the past year, we have received five cases of birds entangled in barbed wire, many with devastating injuries.

One particularly notable case involved a great horned owl we received in August. The owl had become entangled in barbed wire, suffering serious wounds to its right wing. Although its muscles, tendons, and bones remained intact, the injuries were extensive, covering half of the wing and leaving a hole in the skin. The owl underwent two wound debridement surgeries and received over a month of intensive wound care.

After the wounds healed, the owl was transitioned to flight cages to regain its strength and flight capabilities. Through physical therapy, it successfully recovered the mechanics, endurance, and silent flight essential for hunting in the wild. After six months of rehabilitation, we were thrilled to release the owl back into the wild.



Whether helping with the financial cost of caring for this patient, providing food when asked, or simply sharing these stories to those around you, your efforts have helped this and other patients in BPRC care!





EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

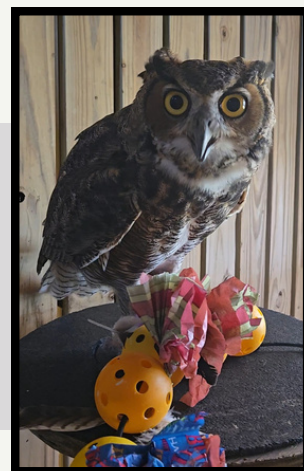
ENRICHMENT CORNER



From searching through a box of paper for bits of food to watching a pinwheel spin in the breeze outside their enclosure, changing a bird's daily sights and experiences has a positive impact on their mental and physical health. Enrichment, which means enhancing something by adding new elements, helps improve the quality of life for our birds through their personalized enrichment programs. Each education ambassador has a unique schedule for when enrichment is introduced, with a wide variety of activities available to suit their individual needs.

These enrichment activities encourage the birds to interact with their environment in new and exciting ways, promoting natural behaviors such as foraging, exploring, and exercising. This can include rotating perches, adding new objects, or introducing different textures and materials to stimulate their senses. The goal is to prevent boredom, which can lead to stress and undesirable behaviors, by ensuring the birds have a dynamic, engaging environment that mirrors the variety they would encounter in the wild.

Our animal care volunteers play a key role in creating fresh enrichment for the birds every day. Their creativity ensures that our resident raptors stay mentally and physically stimulated with new experiences. We could not do what we do without our dedicated volunteers!



Adopt an Education Ambassador

Becoming a sponsor supports the feeding, care and any medical treatments of one of our raptor ambassadors for one year. Adopt a raptor for yourself and one for a friend or family member as a gift!





NEW AMBASSADORS

GIZMO, BARRED OWL

Gizmo had a rough start to life as he was snatched out of his nest as a nestling by another raptor species. He was found on the ground below his nest with multiple puncture wounds to his skull, with one puncture going through his cere and into his right eye. He was admitted to a raptor rehabilitation hospital in Missouri where they deemed him non-releasable due to his injuries. As he was very young, he was purposefully imprinted for education. His puncture wounds healed well, but his right eye never recovered and he only has vision on his left side. He was transferred down to Blackland Prairie Raptor Center at the end of June 2024 and has become a beloved member of the education team. He is still in training, but hopefully will be part of education programs soon.



ZORCHIE, MISSISSIPPI KITE

Zorchie arrived at Blackland Prairie Raptor Center as a fledgling who had been found by a member of the public. Zorchie started off very friendly towards people and was put outside with a group of juvenile kites to see if she would socialize with her species and become more wary of people. Unfortunately she was the first to greet our rehab volunteers every day when they went to clean and replace the food, running up to people and food-begging. She was deemed non-releasable due to imprinting on humans and was removed from the group to start her training as an ambassador bird. She was very quick to learn the basics of training and has a bright future ahead of her as an educational ambassador for her species.



NEW AMBASSADORS

NIGEL, TURKEY VULTURE

Found in September 2024, Nigel was admitted to the Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky severely emaciated. He had no physical injuries but was overly friendly with people right away and classified as a non-releasable imprint. Imprinting removes the fear of people and allows the bird to associate people as their food source and many do not learn how to find food on their own due to this correlation.



He was transferred to Blackland Prairie Raptor Center in November 2024 and has started his journey to become one of our education ambassadors for our raptor programs. He is slowly coming out of his shell and will play a large role in the growth of our future educational programming.

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center

BPRC is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. BPRC receives no federal or state funding. All operating funds come from donations, grants, and educational programming.

We are dedicated to educating the public about birds of prey and their role in maintaining a healthy environment. We are committed to restoring and maintaining the Blackland Prairie habitat at Brockdale Park.

We present approximately two hundred programs each year to school groups, Scout groups, libraries, church groups, and day camps.

BPRC is open to the public on the First Saturday of each month.

Partners

U S Army Corps of Engineers
Texas Master Naturalists
Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society
HEB

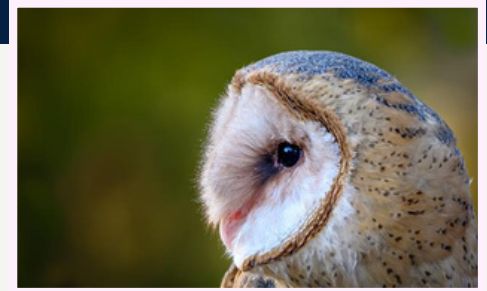
Support

Adopt - A - Raptor
Prairie Partners
Donate Directly
Scout Projects
Volunteers – Individual and Groups





SUPPORT OUR MISSION



PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES

- **Live Raptor Program**
- **Field Trips**
- **Behind the Scenes Tour of BPRC**
- **Education Booth**
- **Camping at Brockdale Park**
- **Scout Programs**
- **Summer Camp**
- **Homeschool Day**

Live Raptor Program The educational program introduces children and adults to the world of raptors. These hawks, owls and falcons are well trained, and with the assistance of BPRC education specialists, show you what makes them an important part of our environment. You will discover their roles in the food chain and their unique adaptations to hunt in woodland, wetlands and prairies. There's no better way to learn about the birds of prey in North Texas than to meet them in person! Also available in a virtual setting.

Field Trips Join us at BPRC for a great day of education. This event includes a raptor presentation, guided trail hike through the native Blackland Prairie, and age appropriate educational activities.

Behind the Scenes Tour of BPRC Ever wondered what the day-to-day looks like at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center? This is your opportunity to tour the "behind the scenes" area to learn more about what we do on a daily basis. As an added bonus, you will have the opportunity to meet our full crew of raptor ambassadors!

Education Booth Our education and marketing team is happy to host a BPRC booth at your event! We will bring information about our center and awesome biofacts (wings and talons) to share with your guests to help educate them on the incredible raptors that are native to this area.

Camping - Book our Park Spend the night at our incredible facility. Enjoy the beautiful scenery - natural setting with Lavon Lake as our backdrop and remnant prairie considered an endangered ecosystem with plants unique to this habitat.

NEW! Scout Programs Exciting new Scout Badge Program opportunities at Blackland Prairie Raptor Center offer hands-on experiences in conservation, wildlife education, and outdoor skills. Scouts can engage in interactive activities, meet our raptor ambassadors, and complete badge requirements in a unique setting. From exploring habitats to learning about bird conservation, our programs provide a memorable adventure for Scouts of all ages!



Programs are a great gift for single, married, or a small group of bird lovers!
To find out more about all of our BPRC Programs, visit: <https://bpraptorcenter.org/programs/>



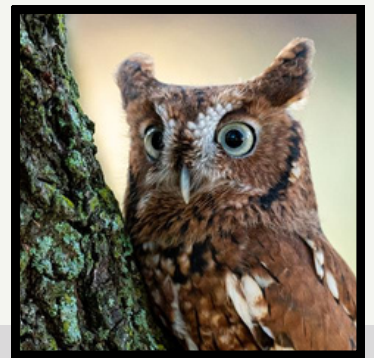
SUPPORT OUR MISSION

LOTS OF WAYS TO DONATE

Our restoration, rehabilitation, and education initiatives are made possible through the generous donations of individuals, families, foundations and businesses. For over 20 years, supporters like you have been the key to the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center's success.

There are many ways to support the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center. Giving through the Annual Fund, becoming part of our Friends of a Feather or Prairie Partner Monthly Giving Society, or Adopting a Raptor are the most direct paths to help the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center focus on our funding priorities, like:

- **Providing outstanding medical care to hospital patients**
- **Supporting the training and care of our education ambassadors**
- **Educating students across North Texas about the importance of raptors and land conservation**
- **Expanding our conservation and restoration efforts**
- **Creating memorable visitor experiences**



Scan here or visit our website at:
<https://bpraptorcenter.org/donate/>





YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

ONE LAST THOUGHT...

Interested in Joining Our Team?



Volunteering at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center offers a unique and fulfilling opportunity to actively contribute to the preservation of our natural environment. Whether you are passionate about conservation, interested in the rehabilitation of raptors, or eager to educate others about the importance of wildlife, our center provides diverse volunteer roles.

Each volunteer plays a vital role in our mission, and the experience offers not only a chance to make a meaningful impact but also to foster a deeper connection with the fascinating world of raptors and their ecosystems. Email volunteer@bpraptorcenter.org if you are interested in joining our team!



Join Our Team!